DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 838 CS 508 905

AUTHOR	Carr, John C.
TITLE	"How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying." Spotlight on Theater Notes.
INSTITUTION	John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[95]
NOTE	13p.; Produced by the Performance Plus Program, Kennedy Center Education Department. Funding also provided by the Kennedy Center Corporate Fund. For other guides in this series, see CS 508 902-906.
PUB TYPE	Guides - General (050)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Acting; *Cultural Enrichment; *Drama; Higher Education; Playwriting; Popular Culture; Production Techniques; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS	Historical Background; *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying; Musicals

ABSTRACT

This booklet presents a variety of materials concerning the current revival of the 1961 play "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying." After a brief introduction to the play, the booklet discusses the plot of the play, how it went from best seller to prize-winning musical, biographical information on the lead actor (Matthew Broderick) and the playwright (Abe Burrows), a quiz about plays, and biographical information about the composer/lyricist (Frank Loesser), the author of the book on which the play is based, the director, the choreographer, and the designer. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Spotlight on Theater Notes

Produced by the Performance Plus Program, Education Department

ED 381 838

MATTHEW BRODERICK IN

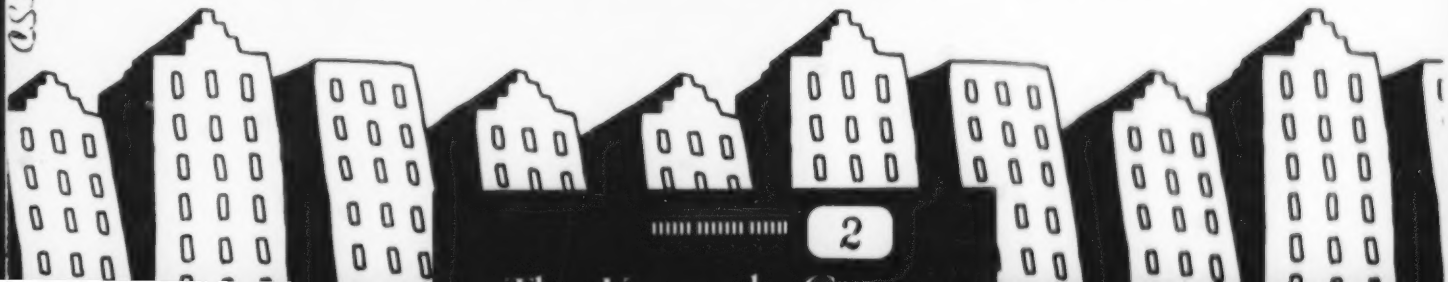
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING!



HOW TO SUCCEED... A NEW PRODUCTION

This production of *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, starring Matthew Broderick with direction by Des McAnuff and choreography by Wayne Cilento, is a new treatment of the 1961 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning musical. Based on Shepherd Mead's satirical guide of the same name, the book for *How To Succeed...* was written by Abe Burrows (based on a non-musical script by Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert). The music and lyrics are by Frank Loesser. The current production originated at the La Jolla Playhouse in Los Angeles, will play a four week run in the Opera House, and will move on to Broadway in March.

HOW TO SUCCEED... THE PLOT

What do you need to know about the plot of *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*? Not much, lest its zany pleasures be lessened.

How about this, from a review in *The New Yorker* in 1961: *How To Succeed...* is "the saga of a young egomaniac who skips to the top of the mercantile world by duplicity, chicanery, and just plain gall."

A bit more? Well, J. Pierrepont Finch, who seems to have studied the works of Horatio Alger and Machiavelli, starts out as a window washer and winds up as the Chairman of the Board of the World Wide Wickets Company. To get to the top, he applies the tenets of Shepherd Mead's book from which the musical gets its title. Oh, yes, Finch finds true love along the way.

One critic referred to the show as a "mixture of Molière and the Marx Brothers." Maybe that's enough.

FROM BEST SELLER TO PRIZE-WINNING MUSICAL

The plot of *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* was inspired by Shepherd Mead's 1952 best-selling satirical handbook of the same name. A non-musical version of the book was written in 1955 by Willie Gilbert and Jack Weinstock, but no producers were interested in staging it. After considerable persuasion, Abe Burrows agreed to adapt the story for musical purposes. Burrows convinced Frank Loesser to provide music and lyrics. The rest, as they say, is history.

After its 1961 Philadelphia tryout, *How To Succeed...* opened on Broadway to unanimous rave reviews and loud audience cheers. The show claimed seven Tony awards, two for Abe Burrows (book and direction) and one for Loesser (lyrics). It had a run of 1,417 performances, placing it at the time as the fifth longest-running musical in Broadway history. By 1965, there were three road

LISTEN CAREFULLY

for a few extra laughs (or smiles, as the case may be):

- the sound of the electric shaver you hear in "I Believe in You" is really made by kazoos.
- the nine bars of classical music that interrupt parts of "Rosemary" are from Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor.

Megan Mullally and Matthew Broderick in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*

companies of the show. Foreign productions were mounted in Great Britain, France, Denmark, Italy, West Berlin, Israel, Australia, and Japan.

How To Succeed... firmly established Robert Morse (who played the conniving hero) as a bright-watt star and provided Rudy Vallee, a popular crooner of the '20s and '30s, with a comeback of considerable force in the role of J.B. Biggley. The show also placed Charles Nelson Reilly, as Bud Frump, in the top rank among stage comedians.

The 1967 film of the show starred both Morse and Vallee. Michele Lee, who had replaced original love interest Bonnie Scott on Broadway, repeated her role in the film.

Matthew Broderick as J. Pierrepont Finch in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*

STAR: MATTHEW BRODERICK

At 33, Matthew Broderick, star of *How To Succeed...*, has established himself on stage and screen as an actor of considerable range and depth. Appearing in musical comedy seems to be a natural next step for a man who has impressed audiences in roles of action and adventure as well as in drama and comedy. Why not singing and dancing, too?

Maybe it's fate for Broderick, who was born five months after the original *How To Succeed...* opened on Broadway, to be playing its leading role in the show's first Broadway revival, particularly since he was born not far from the theater in which the show was playing. His parents are artist Patricia Broderick and the late actor James Broderick.

Matthew Broderick made his off-off-Broadway debut at 17 opposite his father in Horton Foote's *On*

Valentine's Day! When he was 19, he appeared in Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* as the "adopted child"—a performance which earned him both the Outer Critics Circle Award as Best Supporting Actor and a Villager Award. He later played the role of "Alan" for the 1988 film.

Soon after his debut, he was on Broadway in Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, for which he received the Tony Award as Best Actor. Almost simultaneously, he starred in his first film in another Simon script, *Max Dugan Returns*. Still another Simon endeavor, *Biloxi Blues*, followed, both on stage and screen.

Broderick also continued his professional relationship with Horton Foote, appearing in the writer's film *1918* and play *The Widow Claire*.

Among Broderick's other film highlights are *War Games, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Glory, The Freshman* (in which he appeared with Marlon Brando), and, among others, the current *The Road to Wellville* (with Anthony Hopkins) and *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle* (with Jennifer Jason Leigh). In *The Lion King*, he is the voice of Simba.

On television, Broderick has appeared in Athol Fugard's *Master Harold...and the Boys* and in David Mamet's *A Life in the Theatre* with Jack Lemmon.

Lately Broderick has been honing his skills as a director. He has staged several original plays for New York's Naked Angels group—the same adventurous company for which playwright (and Spotlight on Theater interviewee) Jon Robin Baitz develops scripts. Behind the camera, Broderick recently directed the not-yet-released film *Infinity*, written by his mother Patricia Broderick and starring Patricia Arquette.

Check back in another 33 years to see what else the talented Mr. Broderick has accomplished.

SHEPHERD MEAD'S HUMOROUS HANDBOOK

*How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying** is a spoof of both corporate ladder climbing and self-help books.

Mead gets to the comic point quickly:

"Let us assume you are young, healthy, clear-eyed and eager, anxious to rise quickly and easily to the top of the business world.

"You can.

"If you have education, intelligence, and ability, so much the better. But remember that thousands have reached the top without them. You, too, can be among the lucky few.

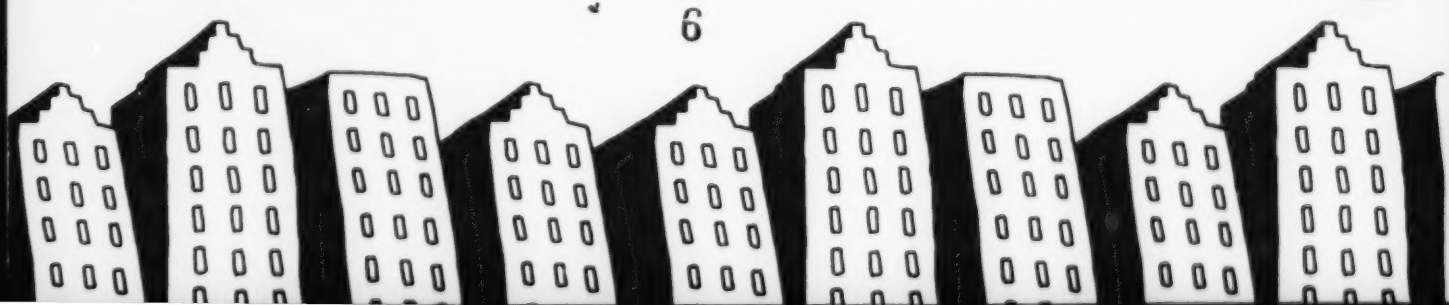
"Just have courage, and memorize the simple rules in the chapters that follow."

There are 17 of those chapters, which offer the fictional J. Pierrepont Finch as exemplar of a young business executive on the make.

Using samples of droll dialog, Mead discusses such topics as: "How To Rise from the Mail Room," "How To Be a Fair-Haired Boy," "How To Play Company Politics," and "How To Write Memos." He also gives advice on choosing the right wife, picking the right country club, and stabbing the right backs.

No wonder the book is subtitled "The Dastard's Guide to Fame and Fortune."

*Mead, Shepherd. *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.



LONG TITLES ARE THE BANE OF WRITERS

who have to refer to them frequently. How about Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, or Arthur Miller's *The Creation of the World and Other Matters* or William Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*?

Publicists, columnists, and critics in particular have tried to trim *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* down to journalistic manageability, with the most often-used *How To Succeed...* and the confusing *HTSIBWRT*.

HOW TO SUCCEED... AS COMIC NEEDLE

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying is a comic needle at work in a skyscraper of balloons. Shepherd Mead's original spoof, and Abe Burrows and Frank Loesser's adaptation of it, go after such big-business balloons as "yes men," executive board meetings, expense accounts, executive washrooms with special keys, nepotism, office Lotharios, and coffee breaks.

Other balloons that get punctured are musical comedy conventions, Horatio Alger rags-to-riches stories, 1960s dreams of suburban life, alumni allegiances, and rigged TV quiz shows.

ORIGINS: SHEPHERD MEAD

Shepherd Mead knew what he was talking about when he wrote his satiric handbook *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. He had climbed his way up the corporate ladder from mail clerk (just like the character in the book) to vice president of Benton and Bowles, one of New York's prestigious advertising agencies in the 1940s and '50s.

What he saw there, what he knew, and what he may have done became the stuff of his 1952 book that quickly did its own climbing—straight up the best seller lists. Mead had moonlighted as a writer (*How To Succeed...* was his third book), but at 41, with royalties aplenty, he retired to England to live as a country gentleman-author.

In addition to numerous other works of fiction, Mead wrote *How To Succeed in Tennis Without Really Trying*, *How To Live Like a Lord Without Really Trying*, *How To Succeed With Women Without Really Trying*, and *How To Get Rich in TV Without Really Trying*.

NAME THAT JIBE

Part of the fun of *How To Succeed...* is the way characters' names remind us who they are in the scheme (or in this case, schemes) of things.

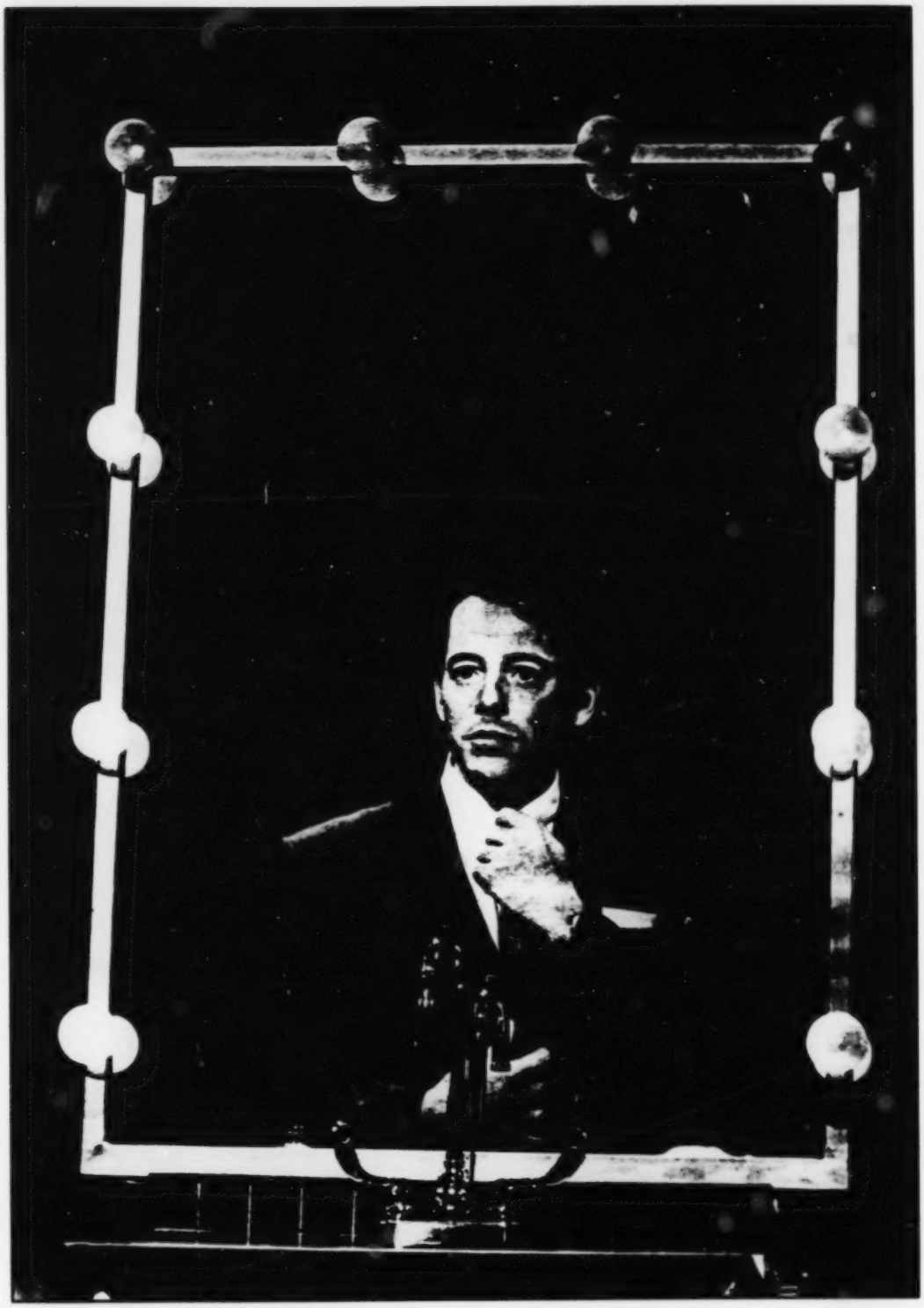
Consider the jibes in these names:

J. B. BIGGLEY
BUD FRUMP
HEDY LARUE
TWIMBLE
WOMPER
GATCH
BRATT

And, of course, the schemer-of-schemers who succeeds in business without really trying:

J. PIERREPONT FINCH

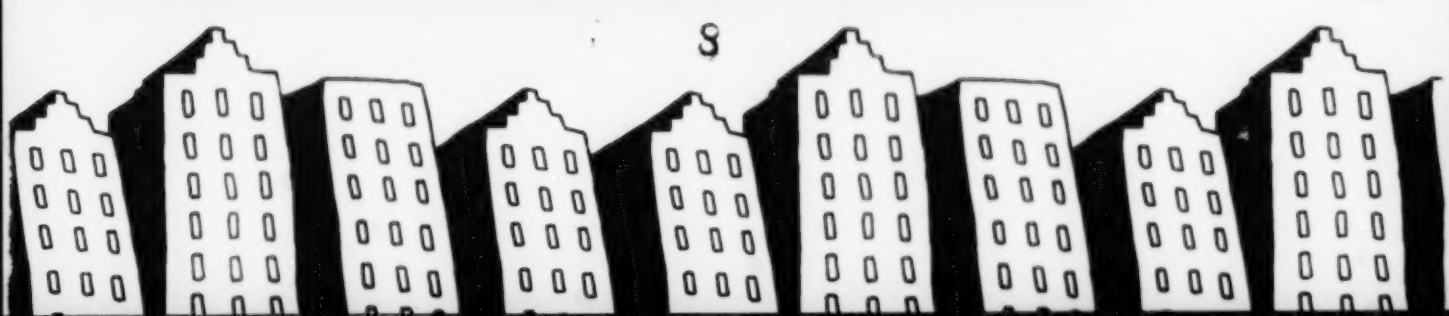
The song "Grand Old Ivy" also has a go at college team mascots, "Chipmunks" and "Groundhogs." Also take a look at the name of the business where all the scheming takes place: World Wide Wickets Company.



HOW TO SUCCEED...

is one of only six musicals to win the Pulitzer Prize. The others are *Of Thee I Sing*, *South Pacific*, *Fiorello!*, *A Chorus Line*, and *Sunday in the Park with George*.

Matthew Broderick in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*



THE SUBTITLE

A Shepherd Mead's 1952 best-selling spoof How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying is A Dastard's Guide to Fame and Fortune.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: A PLAY QUIZ

There's no business like show business, and there is a lot of business in shows. *How To Succeed...* capitalizes on a corporate big-business milieu. The short-lived *Skyscraper* lost its shirt as a musical about the construction business. *City of Angels* merged the movie and private eye businesses, and *How Now, Dow Jones?* was bullish about Wall Street.

Here are clues to 10 musicals whose stories feature business backgrounds. How many can you name? How many played the Kennedy Center?

1. The politics of a union strike tangle with true love in this 1954 musical based on a novel called *7½ Cents*.

2. Phil Silvers and Nancy Walker starred in this 1960 show, produced by David Merrick, dealing with the jukebox business.

3. Promoting "Susanswerphone," a telephone answering business, Judy Holliday suggested that if Romeo and Juliet had had access to a telephone, "Those two kids would be alive today!"

4. This Rodgers and Hart musical of 1941, which led Gene Kelly to Hollywood and stardom, was set in the nightclub business.

5. The business of Parisian high fashion provided Katharine Hepburn with her one and only musical foray.

6. This show about the thinly disguised Motown Records label won a Tony Award as Best Musical in 1982.

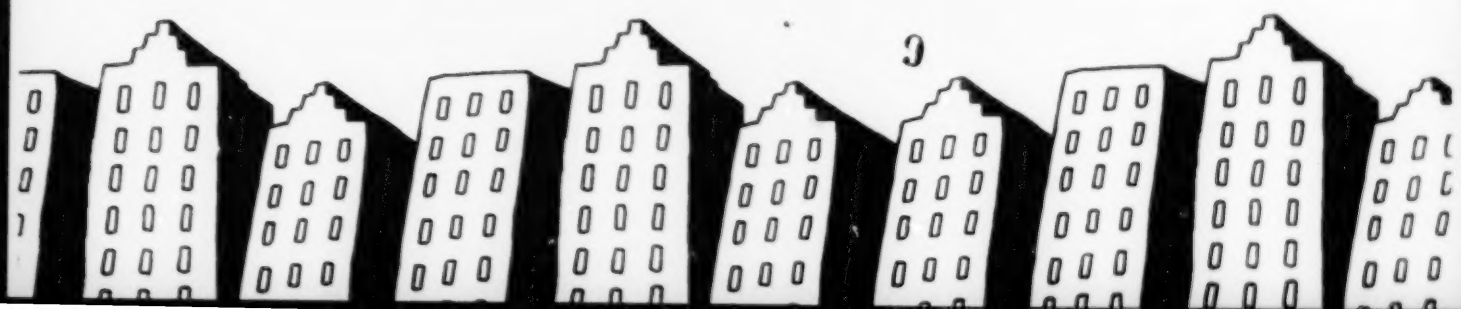
7. Liza Minnelli and Chita Rivera chewed the scenery in this 1984 musical about the roller skating arena business.

8. Stephen Sondheim's tale about an odd couple, played by Angela Lansbury and Len Cariou, featured two businesses—barbering and pie making.

9. A renowned European Jewish family is at the center of this musical about the banking business.

10. Jimmy Durante cavorted with an elephant in this Rodgers and Hart musical about the circus business.

Answers on page 12.



COMPOSER/LYRICIST: FRANK LOESSER

Frank Loesser stands with Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and Stephen Sondheim as one of the great Broadway composer-lyricists of the 20th century.

Loesser, who was born in 1910 and died in 1969, learned his trade as a lyric and sketch writer for vaudeville and radio. In 1936, he reached Broadway as the major contributor of lyrics to the revue *The Illustrators' Show*. After it quickly flopped, he spent the next 10 years writing lyrics, then music and lyrics, for Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley. During that period he worked with some of the major popular music composers of the time: Burton Lane, Jimmy McHugh, Hoagy Carmichael, Arthur Schwartz, and Jule Styne.

His Broadway break through came in 1948 with *Where's Charley?*, an adaptation of the farcical warhorse *Charley's Aunt* for which he supplied music and lyrics. Next came *Guys and Dolls* (1950), followed by *The Most Happy Fella* (1956), *Greenwillow* (1960), and *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* (1961). Although he wrote the score for *Pleasures and Palaces*, the show did not survive its Detroit tryout.

A little-known aspect of Loesser's career is his collaboration in the 1930s with composer William Schuman (a Kennedy Center honoree in 1989), which produced special song material for nightclub and cabaret performers.

From Loesser's Broadway musicals came songs such as "My Darling, My Darling," "Once In Love With Amy," "A Bushel and a Peck," "If I Were a Bell," "More I Cannot Wish You," "Big D," "Standing on the Corner," and "I Believe In You."

AND THEN FRANK LOESSER WROTE

Remember the old Hollywood of the studio system, where legions labored under contract to turn out film after film, year after year? Remember Tin Pan Alley—that somewhat real, somewhat imaginary place where America's popular music was written from the end of the last century into the 1940s? Those were the places where *How To Succeed...* composer-lyricist Frank Loesser developed his talents and had his first successes.

A few of his before-Broadway hits were:

- "The Boys in the Backroom"—he wrote the lyrics for Frederick Hollander's music, and Marlene Dietrich sang the song in the 1939 film *Destry Rides Again*.
- "Two Sleepy People" and "Heart and Soul"—he wrote the lyrics for Hoagy Carmichael's music. Bing Crosby introduced both songs.
- "I Don't Want to Walk Without You Baby"—he wrote the lyrics for Jule Styne's music.
- "Jingle Jangle Jingle"—he wrote

THE EXHIBIT

"Frank Loesser: Trying and Succeeding" will be on display in the Kennedy Center Performing Arts Library, Roof Terrace level, from Friday, January 27 through Friday, May 26.

the lyrics for Joe Lilley's music.

On his own, Loesser wrote both music and lyrics for "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," one of the anthems of World War II. He also wrote the music and lyrics for "I'd Like to Get You on a Slow Boat to China" and "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

Director Des McAnuff

After his Broadway success with *Where's Charley?* and *Guys and Dolls*, he returned to Hollywood to write the words and music for *Hans Christian Andersen*, starring Danny Kaye. The film is memorable especially for two of its songs, "Wonderful Copenhagen" and "Inchworm."

BOOK WRITER: ABE BURROWS

Co-book writer Abe Burrows was one of the leading funny men of his time and a versatile one, establishing himself not only as a playwright but as a director, a radio and television personality, a stand-up comic, and an autobiographer.

Burrows, who was born in 1910 and died in 1985, made his start in show business at 18, performing on the Borscht Belt—that string of summer resort hotels and summer camps in New York's Catskill Mountains.

After writing for nightclub entertainers, he graduated to writing for such popular radio programs of the 1930s and '40s as "Duffy's Tavern" and "The Texaco Star Theater." By 1946, Burrows was appearing on the airways himself, singing satirical songs ("I Looked Under a Rock and Found You," "The Girl With the Three Blue Eyes"). Scriptwriting in Hollywood came next, but not success.

Soon Burrows had his own Monday evening radio program, "Breakfast With Burrows" ("I get up late").

TV was the inevitable next step, where he became a regular on game and talk shows. At the same time, he hosted TV's "Abe Burrows' Almanac."

On Broadway, Burrows established credentials as book writer and director of two Cole Porter musicals, *Can Can* and *Silk Stockings*. He went on to write the books for other musicals and to adapt two French comedies for Broadway. His work as book writer and director for *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* earned him two Tony Awards.

Ensconced as a Broadway luminary, Burrows once reflected on his career in television, "All I can say about TV is, I love the theater."

DIRECTOR: DES McANUFF

How To Succeed... is director Des McAnuff's third musical to play the Kennedy Center's Opera House. The first was *Big River*, the adaptation of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, in 1986. The second was *The Who's Tommy*, which completed a five-week run January 22. For both shows, McAnuff received the Tony Award as Best Director, as well as numerous other accolades.

Until recently, McAnuff was the artistic director of California's La Jolla Playhouse, a position he held for 10 years. While LaJolla was his base of operation, McAnuff established himself throughout the country and in Canada as a director with sharp perceptions and theatrical savvy. He has also established himself as a teacher of note at New York's Juilliard School and at the University of California-San Diego.

In a December interview in *The Washington Post*, McAnuff stressed that while he is known nationally as a director of musicals, his interests are eclectic. Musicals, yes, but also Shakespeare, Chekhov, films, and more. "I believe the American theater is about eclecticism," he said. "I really want the freedom to be able to bounce around from genre to genre. If you forced me to stop, I would be very unhappy."

CHOREOGRAPHER: WAYNE CILENTO

Wayne Cilento has known success on both sides of the footlights. On stage, he received acclaim as a featured dancer, notably in *A Chorus Line* and *Dancin'*. Off stage, he garnered additional praise when he added choreography to his credits.

One of the original cast members of *A Chorus Line*, Cilento claimed the spotlight with the memorable "I Can Do That." His standout performance in Bob Fosse's *Dancin'* earned him a Tony Award nomination.

While dancing on Broadway, Cilento appeared in television commercials and was soon asked to try his hand at choreographing them. That led to providing the dances for two shows directed by his current collaborator Des McAnuff, a national tour of *Chess* and a La Jolla Playhouse revival of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Choreographer Wayne Cilento

Most recently, Washington playgoers joined critics and prize givers in applauding Cilento for his no-holds-barred choreography for *The Who's Tommy*.

Answers to Play Quiz, page 8.

1. *The Pajama Game*
2. *Do Re Mi*
3. *Bells Are Ringing*
4. *Pal Joey*
5. *Coco*
6. *Dreamgirls*
7. *The Rink*
8. *Sweeney Todd*
9. *The Rothschilds*
10. *Jumbo*

The Pajama Game and *Sweeney Todd* have played the Kennedy Center.

Give yourself one point for each correct answer. Total: 12 points.

12-11: You've just been made chairperson of the board.

10-8: You've been elected second vice president.

7-4: You've been moved to middle management.

3-0: Back to the mailroom!

Scenic Designer John Arnone

THE DESIGNERS

The team of designers for *How To Succeed...* includes John Arnone (scenery), Susan Hilferty (costumes), Howell Binkley (lighting), and Batwin and Robin Productions.

Arnone is remembered by Opera House playgoers for his scenic design for *Tommy*. Hilferty's work has been seen on stage, film, and television, as well as in dance performances. Binkley has designed for international theater, opera, and dance productions. Batwin and Robin Productions supplied the video displays for *Tommy*.

Working together, Arnone and Batwin and Robin Productions have created unique background computerized images that cast a skyscraper as a central image in the production. Hilferty's brightly colored costumes recapture the mod fashions of the 1960s, while Binkley's lighting designs give the production a musical comedy brightness.

YOU MAY WANT TO READ...

Burrows, Abe. *Honest, Abe; or Is There Really No Business Like Show Business?* Boston: Little, Brown, 1980.

Burrows, Abe. *The Abe Burrows Songbook*. New York: Doubleday, 1955.

Loesser, Frank. *The Frank Loesser Songbook*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Loesser, Susan. *A Most Remarkable Fella: Frank Loesser and the Guys and Dolls in his Life*. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1993.

The Spotlight On Theater discussion will be held on Thursday, February 16, from 6:15-7 p.m. in the Kennedy Center's Opera House and will feature Matthew Broderick and members of the cast.

Writer: John C. Carr

Production photos: Ken Howard

The Kennedy Center

James D. Wolfensohn, Chairman
Lawrence J. Wilker, President
Derek E. Gordon, Associate Managing Director for Education

Funding of the Performance Plus program is provided by the U.S. Department of Education and the Kennedy Center Corporate Fund.